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Extract from
Interrogation of Hideki Tojo
26 March 1946

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A Yesterday there was some interrogation about prisoners and there is something I would like to say about that.

Q I was about to bring that question up and ask if you didn't have something you wanted to say.

A Since the end of the war, I have read about the inhumane acts committed by Japanese army and navy personnel. These were certainly not the intention of those in authority, that is, of the General Staffs, or the War or Navy Departments, or myself. We did not even suspect that such things had happened. The Emperor especially, because of his benevolence, would have had a contrary feeling. Such acts are not permissible in Japan. The character of the Japanese people is such that they believe that neither Heaven nor Earth would permit such things. It will be too bad if people in the world believe that these inhumane acts are the result of Japanese character. [The preceding portion of the answer was read back to the witness who agreed as to its correctness.]

The second point with regard to prisoners: The treatment of prisoners is the responsibility of various army commanders, hence I relied upon them to have regard for humane considerations and to follow the terms of international treaties and rules. Of course, since I was the supervisor of military administration, I am completely responsible.

The third point is that Japanese manners and customs are different from those of Europe and America and the standard of living is also different. These things affected the treatment of prisoners. There are some things I want to explain about this.

a) In regard to inhumane acts, these are not permitted under Japanese manners or customs either.

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b) In regard to the difference in the standard of living, the treaties provide that prisoners are to be given the same rations as the troops of the detaining nation. That was also directed in orders that were issued. Because of the difference in the standard of living, the American and European prisoners thought when they were given the same rations as Japanese troops that the rations were very very unappetizing. Particularly, on the battlefields, this feeling was very strong, I believe. In regard to life in the barracks */sakusha/*, the barracks, for example, at Omori, which are field barracks */yaeichi/*, they would not be thought bad by the Japanese troops, but the European and American prisoners thought they were very poor.

c) The Japanese idea about being taken prisoner is different from that in Europe and America. In Japan, it is regarded as a disgrace. Under Japanese criminal law, anyone who becomes a prisoner while still able to resist has committed a criminal offense, the maximum punishment for which is the death penalty. In Europe and America, it is different. A person who is taken prisoner is honored because he has discharged his duties, but in Japan, it is very different.

d) I want to say something now about the feeling with regard to slapping on the side of the face. In Japanese families where the educational standard is low, slapping is used as a means of training. In the Japanese army and navy, although this is forbidden, it continues in fact because of the influence of the customs of the people. This, of course, is a custom that ought to be corrected; it ought to be stopped; but I don't think it is a crime. It is something that comes from custom. That is all I want to say on this.

There is a correction I would like to make regarding yesterday's interrogation. Yesterday, I was asked if I had met Lieutenant General HOMMA. I said that I had not met him, but this year when I was in Omori Prison, I met him. One other point. When an army commander came back to Japan during the war, he would make a situation report to the Emperor. On such occasions, he would be accompanied by the Chief of Staff and the War Minister. I do not well remember, it may be that I met HOMMA on such an occasion since he was an army commander. That is all I wanted to say.

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